

Beyond Expectations

Macrobiotic means delicious when it's at Seed restaurant in Venice. *By Sari Anne Tuschman*

BE HONEST, when you think macrobiotic, you don't think delicious. That's okay with Eric Lechasseur, chef and owner of the vegan macrobiotic restaurant Seed in Venice. He says you don't have to like the sound of macrobiotic, you just have to be willing to try it.

Lechasseur, who has cooked for Madonna and Tobey Maguire, as well as at such restaurants as Venice's Rose Café, saw a need for a vegan eatery in the beach town and opened Seed last November. But it isn't just West Siders who are enjoying Lechasseur's macrobiotic dishes; the chef says he often sees customers come from as far away as Pasadena. You may even run into a few celebs while you're there—Maguire and his wife, Jen Meyer, frequent Seed, as does Leonardo DiCaprio.

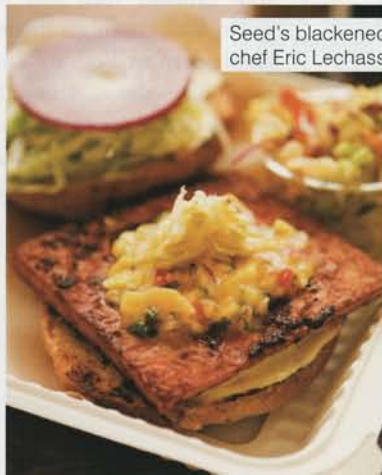
The menu features salads, soups, one-dish grain bowls, panini, curry bowls, burgers and signature dishes such as a Southwest burger made with beans and grains and served with vegan soy cheese, guacamole and ancho chile spread; seitan pepper steak over brown rice; and a blackened tempeh burger with

sauerkraut. Want fries with that? No problem; sweet-potato fries are a huge seller. "A lot of my customers—more than 50 percent—are meat eaters," says Lechasseur. "But if you cook well, and you know how to balance herbs, spices and salt, there is no reason why you wouldn't like eating vegan food."

Lechasseur, who is from Quebec and was trained there, as well as in France and Japan, was led to a vegan macrobiotic diet when he moved to California in the early '90s for his girlfriend (now wife), Sanae, who'd been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Now cancer-free, she credits her macrobiotic diet with helping her stay that way. At the same time, Lechasseur was suffering from a skin allergy for which he was getting two cortisone shots

a week. He decided to follow his Sanae's lead, and in three months, was cured.

Lechasseur says eating vegan macrobiotic has completely changed his life, and though he's not looking to convert you, after eating at Seed, you may decide to make the change on your own. *Seed, 1604 Pacific Avenue, Venice, 310-396-1604; seedkitchen.com.*



Seed's blackened tempeh burger; chef Eric Lechasseur

